

[JUNE 13, 1953]

Government who can give a guarantee to be still in office when the talk ends. And that three-Power meeting must achieve something valuable for the three, and might be followed by a meeting of four of graver import. There is no guarantee that it will, no promise that it will settle anything at all unilaterally, but I shall be surprised if the sleeper does not wake up to find that while he dreamed, the night watchman had not been nodding. The impression remains vivid in my memory that in 1937 Coronation fever had attacked and almost mastered even the leading statesmen, and that in those times of mortal danger dancing Chancellors and Premiers rehearsing in fancy dress were the order of the day. The parallel between those two Coronation years is curiously exact. There was no encouragement to be found in France. Soon after the Coronation in May 1937, Blum's Government fell and France remained under feeble, indeterminate direction. Then, as now, for a brief season, France and her allies looked to M. Reynaud to "see what he could do." Then, as now, the word Locarno was topical. In 1936 Germany had denounced the pact and new Locarno substitutes were under discussion. In 1953 the name bobs up again as a possible solution. *Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*, but I fancy bitter experiences are lessons learned at last in high places. In 1953 Coronation fever did not prevent the Government's key-men from sticking to their vital tasks.

Reynaud's Remedy.—M. Reynaud's nostrum for an internationally responsible France proved unacceptable. I cannot see that France can be happy till she gets it, or something on those lines. Paul Reynaud is an old man, an elder statesman; he has had unrivalled opportunity to study French politics and her constitution, and to assess the efforts made to improve it. At a moment (there have been several notable ones) when the Western Powers looked anxiously towards France for some guarantee of a Government sufficiently stable to take a vital part in a world event, at a time when Frenchmen are unusually touchy about France's acceptance as a decisive power and influence internationally, M. Reynaud only asked for an assurance that, if he formed a Government, it would have a chance to survive long enough to achieve something. To us, he did not appear to open his mouth too wide. Apart from offering the voice of France in a vital three-Power discussion on world problems, there are not a few domestic "somethings" to be done in France. But Parliament wouldn't have him and his nostrums. The parties couldn't agree to let him try. Some don't want stable government, some panicked at his audacity, some objected to this or that in the implications of his domestic policy. The President must try again, the eternal compromise must bubble and burst, the inevitable day be postponed. M. France or another may carry the tottering compromise along for a while, but one day, let us hope not too late, Frenchmen must rise and unite to sweep away the tangle of their constitution and rewrite it to include the safeguards omitted, though comprehended, seven years ago. The greatness of a great people is of no avail if their Government is unstable as water.

Jam Yesterday, Jam To-morrow.—They order some things better in Paris than London. London wasn't built for crowds or for ceremonial marches. Paris was so in large part. It was planned, and traffic, if more dangerous, moves much faster in Paris. The rate of progress through the centre of London in the weeks just before and after the Coronation must have reached an all-time nadir. Reserved streets and crash barriers and decoration-arches worse confounded the confusion caused by the influx of new millions on foot and in cars, jay walkers and jay-drivers. The men I most pitied and admired were the London omnibus drivers. For them time was not on their side, no meters were ticking-up as they jerked from one circus to another or fought round the bend at Hyde Park Corner at 10 yards a minute. London those days was no place for the claustrophobic, the impatient, the man or woman to whom time means money. For the philosopher and the student of character and manners it offered fine opportunities for study and reflection. And, on the whole, Londoners revealed a good humour and patience beyond praise and beyond belief. If time is money for all who work, then the loss of money to the nation during those weeks of jam and chaos would be hard to assess with the last three noughts omitted. King's Cross is not very far from Piccadilly Circus nor Charing Cross from St. George's Hospital, but the journeys those days might take longer than the journey of 20 miles between Petersfield and Winchester or Liverpool and Guildford. But perhaps what British "shopkeepers" lost on the swings, they made up on the roundabouts, even if some were luckier than others. Driving across England, I felt no doubt that those who deal in "bunting" have no grounds for complaint. THE OLD STAGER

NEXT WEEK'S ISSUE

THE CORONATION NAVAL REVIEW

A Special Issue of "The Sphere" Commemorating the Queen's Review of the Fleet at Spithead

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THE QUEEN'S BARGE FOR USE ON THE THAMES DURING CORONATION CELEBRATIONS



THE PORT OF LONDON AUTHORITY'S MOTOR LAUNCH "NORE," WHICH HAS BEEN EQUIPPED AS A ROYAL BARGE FOR THE QUEEN DURING HER PROGRESS ALONG LONDON RIVER: At the after-end of the barge is the specially constructed, glass-surrounded cabin surmounted with the crown on a cushion. At the other end of the cabin is the Royal Cypher. The first official use of the barge was arranged for yesterday, when Her Majesty and the Duke of Edinburgh were to return from Tower Pier to Westminster Pier after being entertained to luncheon at Guildhall.

"CITY OF DURBAN," THE NEW ELLERMAN VESSEL FOR THE SOUTH AFRICAN RUN



THE LAST OF FOUR VESSELS BUILT FOR ELLERMAN LINES ON THEIR SOUTH AFRICAN RUN TAKES THE WATER AT VICKERS-ARMSTRONG NAVAL YARD AT HIGH WALKER, NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE: The 13,360-ton *City of Durban* leaves the slipway after being named by Mrs. A. F. Hull, wife of the Chairman of Ellerman Lines. Like her sister-ships, the *City of Durban* is a passenger and cargo vessel having room for 107 passengers. The other ships of the same class already in service are the *City of Exeter* and the *City of Port Elizabeth*, the latter being the Company's first passenger vessel to be launched since the war. The other ship is the *City of York*, which is expected to go into service in October, while the *City of Durban* will not leave these shores until January of next year.

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